

## Nadler's Statement in Support of Health Care Reform

Saturday, 07 November 2009

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congressman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), a leading proponent of the public option, spoke out in favor of H. R. 3962, the Affordable Health Care for America Act, when it was considered by the House of Representatives.

"This past August, political pundits and TV-talking heads had the public option dead on arrival," said Nadler. "Yet, because of the efforts of progressive Members in Congress, in which I was proud to join, we succeeded in keeping the public option in this bill and ensured that the American people would be given an alternative to corporate health insurance," continued Nadler.

Watch the video of Congressman Nadler's remarks here .

The following is the text of Nadler's floor statement:

"Madam Speaker, I have spent much of my adult life fighting for greater health care rights and universal health coverage. This bill, H.R. 3962, makes great strides toward achieving those goals.

"Around the country, we see millions of people with inadequate or no coverage, with another 14,000 Americans joining the ranks of the uninsured each day. We see families who go to sleep at night knowing they are one serious illness away from bankruptcy, the reason for 55% of all bankruptcies filed last year. We see the rising ranks of the unemployed who face going it alone in the prohibitively expensive individual coverage market – or worse, going without insurance at all. And we see 20,000 people die every year because they have no health insurance.

"At the same time that this stark reality hits hard working Americans, insurance companies have conspired to keep costs high. These costs, upward of 15-35% squandered on outrageously high administrative costs, do nothing to make people healthier but do much to line the pockets of insurance companies and help their corporate bottom line.

"This is unacceptable. We must take action. That's why I support the Affordable Health Care for America Act.

"As with any legislation, there have been some compromises made along the way. I would have preferred a single payer system, the most effective and least costly way to implement a health delivery system. But I, like so many of my colleagues, have come to see a competitive public option as the best available way to refocus our misguided health care approach. A public option will put patients and doctors, not corporate bottom lines, at the forefront. This public option will add much needed competition into an insurance market that must be kept honest, and it will work to drive down rates.

"Madam Speaker, this past August, political pundits and TV-talking heads had the public option dead on arrival. Yet, because of the efforts of progressive Members in Congress, in which I was proud to join, we succeeded in keeping the public option in this bill and ensured that the American people would be given an alternative to corporate health insurance. And make no mistake about it – the public option weathered the storms of misinformation, slander, and downright lies because the American people saw through the political game playing and saw the public option for what it is – an option, not a mandate, that will help stem the cost of ever-rising health care costs.

“In addition to the public option, this national health reform bill implements key insurance industry reforms, strengthens Medicare, and immediately gives hope to the millions of Americans currently living without health insurance.

“It will end discrimination against pre-existing conditions, and end the cruel practice of rescission, which allows insurance companies to drop people from coverage if their illness is considered too expensive. This bill also guarantees that people with insurance will not face devastating costs when they get sick by placing limits on out-of-pocket medical expenses, and creating, for the first time ever, a voluntary long-term care program. And H.R. 3962 would end the blanket exemption insurance companies currently enjoy from anti-trust laws. With this change, we can now bring anti-trust enforcement against the egregious practices of price-fixing and market allocation.

“H.R. 3962 contains numerous provisions that help our seniors by strengthening and enhancing the Medicare program. This bill reduces the donut hole to \$500 immediately and eliminates it entirely by 2019. It allows the HHS secretary to negotiate prescription drug costs, which I have long advocated for, eliminates out-of-pocket expenses for preventive care for seniors, and extends the solvency of the Medicare trust fund for at least five years.

“Small businesses also receive desperately needed assistance from this bill. Initially, businesses with up to 25 employees, then growing to businesses with up to 100 employees by 2015, will be able to join the health exchange, which will allow small business employees to take advantage of group rates and a broader range of insurance options — a key change that will go a long way toward helping small businesses keep down their number one expense, which is the cost of providing health care coverage.

“For America’s young people, who make up 29% of the uninsured in America, H.R. 3962 will permit parents to extend coverage to their children until their 27th birthday.

“To help American families defray the costs of health coverage, this bill extends assistance on a sliding scale to families earning up to \$88,000 per year. This will go a long way toward ending the cruel choice between health care coverage and other necessities.

“Madam Speaker, there are some who have said that health care reform is too hard. There are those who have allowed misinformation and politics to push them to root against helping their fellow Americans to have access to quality, affordable health care. There are even those who, for reasons I fail to grasp, want to continue status quo.

“To those people, Madam Speaker, I say — the status quo is not an option. We have a remarkable opportunity in front of us. We have an opportunity to make fundamental changes to the way we view health care and deliver services, to implement a competitive public health insurance option that puts the patient before the quarterly financial report. And, with passage of this bill, we will be able to say for the first time in this country that just because you lose your job, you won’t lose your health insurance.

“Madam Speaker, this is monumental. This is historic. And I am proud to cast my vote in favor the Affordable Health Care for America Act.”